

ZENEN OZOA
OWNER BOTTOM FISHING VESSEL KA IMI KAI
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February 14, 2006

Director William T. Hogarth
United States Department of Commerce
NOAA/NMFS
1350 East West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Mr. Director,

Greetings from the bottom fishing vessel Ka Imi Kai. My Name is Zenen Ozoa. I am the owner of the bottom fishing vessel Ka Imi Kai, operating as one of eight federal permittees in the Northwest Hawaii Islands, the Coral Reef Sanctuary.

I write only for myself, my business and my three full time employees that work on my vessel. The following is my own opinion and observations of the fishery.

CURRENT FISHING OPERATIONS:

Fishing in the sanctuary is very challenging. As you know the high cost of fuel, the distances that we are required to travel, and the normal increases in overall operational expenses has taken any real potential for profit out of this business. The price of fish realized at the Honolulu auction has not risen sufficiently to cover the cost of operations and fish takes are smaller with the same or even more fishing effort. Foreign imports of similar species and quality, delivered in Hawaii (FOB), routinely under price our products by \$1.50 per pound. Further, the inability to expand our business due to regulations and uncertainty makes long term survivability very uncertain. Nevertheless, this is the fishing situation in the Northwest Hawaiian Island; today. Low profitability, uncertainty, zero growth potential, and jurisdictional "land mines" provide the perfect recipe for business failure.

If left in its current state; the fishery will undoubtedly fail as the fishing vessels age, fishing stocks are depleted, the interest in bottom fishing diminishes, and profitability erodes.

PUBLIC OPINION:

During the past six months I have been contacted by a national representative of the Pew Foundation, by a local Hawaiian environmental activist group and others that have expressed concerns about terminating all fishing operations in the Coral Reef Sanctuary. Further, I have read in the local newspapers and in various other periodicals that Hawaii State Governor Linda Lingle, US Congressman Ed Case, and various other state and federal officials also want to totally protect the Coral Sanctuary from all fishing activity. In my opinion the general population of our State supports a total fishing ban in the Coral Reef Sanctuary. That feeling is undeniable.

RUMOR CONTROL:

There is no shortage of rumors and opinions about the Coral Reef Sanctuary. Meeting, discussions, conferences, focus groups, surveys, polls and the like are productive but eventually someone is going to have to make a decision. My opinion is that closure of the fishery be considered as the final and best option and that closure should be done soon.

BUY OUT THE BOTTOM FISHERY AND CLOSE THE AREA PERMANENTLY:

I suggest that each of the eight remaining Federal licensee's operating with bottom fishing permits in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands be bought out, at a fair price, by the Federal Government and that all fishing activity cease in the Coral Reef Sanctuary. Further, that the procedures used in this proposed buy out be done in a similar fashion that has already been successfully implemented in other US fisheries.

CONCLUSION:

As United States Representative Ed Case, and others have stated, we have come to the time for making choices. The refuge is at a crossroads and leadership and decision making are now in order. Delaying the implementation of a buy out serves no good purpose and is contrary to the best interests of all parties concerned.

I remain available to assist you and other decision makers in anyway possible. Thanks for you time and concern.

Best regards,

Zenen Ozoa

BFV Ka Imi Kai